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Layoffs and reductions approved by Santa Cruz City Schools Board

By Megha Satyanarayana

Posted: 03/03/2010 10:09:49 PM PST

Updated: 03/03/2010 10:12:00 PM PST

SANTA CRUZ - Faced with a deficit of \$5.2 million, an incomplete list of retirees and no concessions on a reduced school year by the teachers' union, the Santa Cruz City Schools Board agreed Wednesday to lay off or cut the hours of the equivalent of 57 full-time K-12 educators, 23 temporary K-12 educators, every program in adult education and about 50 temporary adult education teachers.

School districts and community colleges have until March 15 to give out preliminary pink slips. As the state budget is changed, then approved, districts learn better what their state funding is, and many of those pink slips are rescinded. It's a process often lambasted for being thrust upon districts in the absence of solid information.

"Whether we like it or not, what we are doing is the worst case scenario where we have no success at the bargaining table," said Board President Rachel Dewey Thorsett.

District administration has agreed on a nine-day furlough. Santa Cruz City Schools and the Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers are negotiating a shortened school year by five days.

Tuesday, the Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District agreed to 10 days of furlough over two years, plus binding arbitration. The move reportedly will save dozens of jobs.

While negotiations continue with Santa Cruz teachers, about 40 educators at Harbor High School, the district office and Branciforte Middle School have said they will

retire at year's end, said teacher's union President Barry Kirschen. He said more teachers are expected to announce their departures by Friday, and he hopes the move will save \$1 million. While that possible chunk of savings will save some jobs, it hasn't been figured into preliminary notices.

While the district voted to cut almost all adult education programs and teachers, they hope the move is temporary, and the programs and positions can be restored if funding is available.

While most of the eight resolutions regarding layoffs were unanimously approved, Trustees Cynthia Hawthorne and Claudia Vestal did not approve the resolution to eliminate adult education programs. Assistant Superintendent Tanya Krause said the board needed the most flexibility immediately and if the state funding situation gets worse, the district would have little leeway.

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